

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Lewis and Clark Campsite

September 9-10, 1805 and June 30-July 2, 1806 (Party)

“Travelers Rest”

Research Designation: 09095P, 1805-09-09(P)-28

Geographic Location: WGS84: LAT: 46.74908d, LON: -114.08917d

USGS 7.5' Topo Quad: Florence, MT, 1999, Section 34

General Location. The site for this camp is located south of Lolo, Montana, along a bench-land on the south side of Lolo Creek. To reach the site, turn west on Mormon Creek Road from Highway 93 and travel westward for 0.3 miles to Onyx Drive. Turn north on Onyx Dr. and continue for 0.1 miles. The camp is on private property in the area of this location.

Most of the photos and maps in this report are high resolution.
A zoom factor of 400% is practical in most cases.



Figure 1. 09095P, 1805-09-09(P)-28. This is the campsite as seen from Onyx Drive looking approximately northeast. The fence in the middle of the photo is running North-South. The campsite stretches east and west from the old building. (Steve F. Russell)

This is one of a series of research reports on the campsites and landmarks of the Lewis and Clark Trail between western Montana and Lewiston, Idaho.

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Abstract

This campsite is well known to the Lewis and Clark Trail community. It was a popular camping place for Salish, Nez Perce, and early Explorers. The location was at the junction of the Lolo Trail (from Lolo, Montana to Kamiah, Idaho) with the 1806 Bitterroot Trail (from Missoula, Montana to Gibbon's Pass). The Corps of Discovery was camped there a total of 5 days in 1805-06.

The campsite was originally thought to be near the mouth of Lolo Creek (as interpreted by an old highway marker on US 93) but all the Journal evidence from 1805-06 and the Nicholson survey of 1866 placed it at, or near, the location given in this report. In recent years the interpreted location has been moved to its present location, and is interpreted by the Travelers Rest State Park. Despite archeological digs, the location is still debated, although the location most researchers have identified are within 1000 feet of each other – very good agreement when locating historic campsites. This author's most current research placed the camp on a dry benchland adjacent to the creek, and on the south side.

From the Journals¹

[Lewis 1805]

we continued our route down the W. side of the river about 5 miles further and encamped on a large creek which falls in on the West as our guide informs that we should leave the river at this place and the weather appearing settled and fair I determined to halt the next day rest our horses and take some celestial Observations. we called this Creek Travellers rest. it is about 20 yards wide a fine bould clear running stream.

[Lewis 1806]

a little before sunset we arrived at our old encampment on the south side of the creek a little above its entrance into Clark's river. here we encamped with a view to remain two days in order to rest ourselves and horses & make our final arrangements for separation.

[Clark 1805]

Encamped on a large Creek from the left which we call Travelers rest Creek. (4 miles Through an open Valley to a large Creek from the left. Called Travelers rest and Encamped the 9th & 10th).

[Clark 1806]

a little before Sunset we arrived at our old encampment on the S. Side of the Creek a little above its entrance into Clark's river. here we Encamped with a view to remain 2 days in order to rest ourselves and horses and make our final arrangements for Separation.

[Ordway 1805]

we Camped on the bank of a creek which runs in to the Small River about 2 miles below and bottoms of cotton timber. Smooth handsome plains on each Side of this creek, and plenty of choke cherries.

[Ordway 1805]

¹ From the internet resource: "The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/index.html>

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we wrote fast untill about Sunset at which time we arived at travvellers rest where we Camped the 9th & 10th of Sept. last. we Camped here in order to Stay 2 or 3 days to refresh our horses and kill Some meat &C. the Musquetoos verry troublesome here.

[Gass 1805]

We travelled 19 miles and encamped on a large creek, which comes in from the south².

[Gass 1806]

In the evening we arrived at Travellers'-rest creek, where the party rested two days last fall, and where it empties into Flathead (called Clarke's) river...

[Whitehouse 1805]

We came about 20 Miles this day, & encamped on a plain, near a Creek which run into the River about 2 Miles below where we were encamped.

[Whitehouse 1806]

[There are no journal entries]

Historical and Journal Maps

Figure 2 shows Clark's map of the Travelers Rest area. It is very good for that era of map making and shows the location of the campsite, trails, and waterways quite accurately, but not to scale. It was clear in this map, and in the Journals, that the campsite was not at the mouth of Lolo Creek as originally interpreted by the old US 93 Highway sign.

Research Analysis (Location, Field Explorations)

The quality of the documentation for determining the location of Travelers Rest Camp is fair to good. There are several journal entries providing clues along with Clark's map of the area. This Camp was also documented by George Nicholson of the Virginia City and Lewiston Wagon Road Expedition in 1866. There are a number of crude, large-scale archive maps of the area that provide some information but are not sufficiently accurate to pinpoint the location. The Latitude reported in the journals for Travelers Rest is N46-48-28.8, but this would place the camp approximately 3.4 miles north of the actual site and is not very useful information.

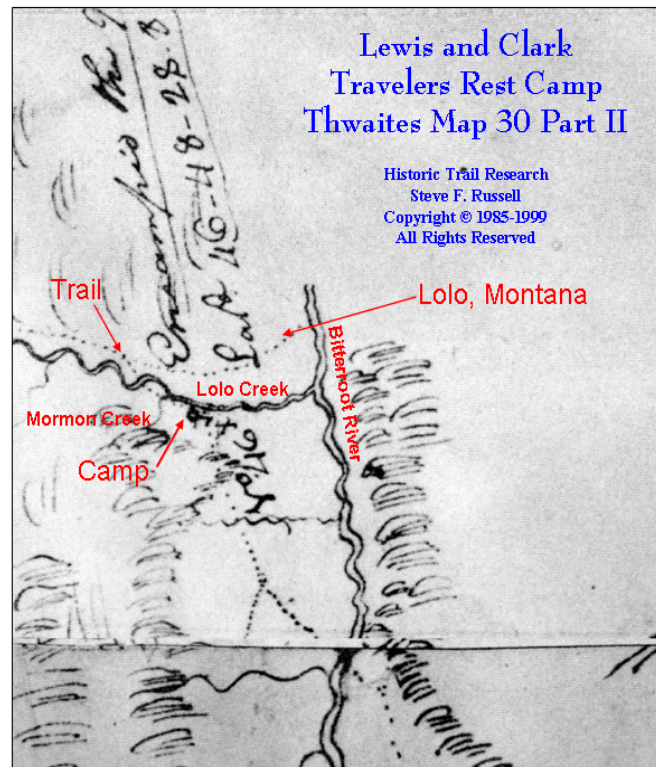


Figure 2. Original map by Clark with research annotations. North is up.

² Gass means West.

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In 1866, George Nicholson did a survey of the Northern Nez Perces Trail³ between Lolo, Montana and Weippe Prairie, Idaho. This route was proposed for a wagon road and, although the wagon road was not built, an excellent trail to a wagon road grade was constructed. This trail would be followed by the Nez Perce in the 1877 war and later become the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. Between 1907 and 1935, the US Forest Service used it as a mainline trail for accessing fire control lookouts. In the 1990, the Forest Service opened several miles of this trail for hiking and horseback riding.

Maps of roads and trails produced in the 1870s and later, including Government Land Office (GLO) documents, provide limited clues but are of somewhat marginal value. The reason is that the historic Indian trails were frequently rerouted and updated to accommodate changing destinations and some wagon travel. Wet lowlands and difficult hills were avoided. Additionally, the Indian trails were routed to provide natural reconnaissance and protection from enemies. Perhaps this is the reason that the original trail went over the ridge to the south – to provide a good view of the valley north and south. Additionally, the quality of the Government Land Office survey documentation was highly variable in its early years. The GLO survey notes for Lolo Creek don't mention the Lolo Trail in some locations even though it was very pronounced.

The actual camp for Sep 3 would be dispersed over a wide area when the number of horses and people in the expedition are taken into consideration. It is easy to visualize a camp of 3-5 acres or more when there was room to spread out. A dispersed, irregularly shaped camp makes the reporting of an exact Latitude and Longitude only a good approximation, but the coordinates given in this report provide a probable location for purposes of documentation and further research. The topography of the camp area can be described as a "bench land" adjacent to a small, lower level, flood plain. Beaver were no doubt very active in the flood plain and, depending on the variations of the beaver dams, the camping locations and horse feed locations varied somewhat over time. It is very probably that certain seasons, and Lolo Creek conditions, dictated camping on the "bench land" south of Jade Lane. This area is now under intensive housing development and was used since homesteading days for agriculture so it is probably lost to meaningful archaeological research.

During this research, I consulted a descendent of the original land owners, Gerold H. Tucker, who informed me that, during his lifetime, the flood plain location was usually swampy and unsuitable for a campsite until recent times of drought. Historically, Lolo Creek flowed at a much greater volume than it does today.

This document was originally created in 1999 but has been revised over the years to account for new information and improved GIS technology.

³ Refer to the sections "Research Resources Used" at the end of this report.

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Topographic Maps

The topographic map in Figure 3 shows the campsite in relationship to the trail system, topographic features, National Historic Landmark, and the Interpretive Center. Some information has been added to the map since the original research result in 1999. Note that the landmark and the campsite are in very good agreement when the quality of the information is considered.

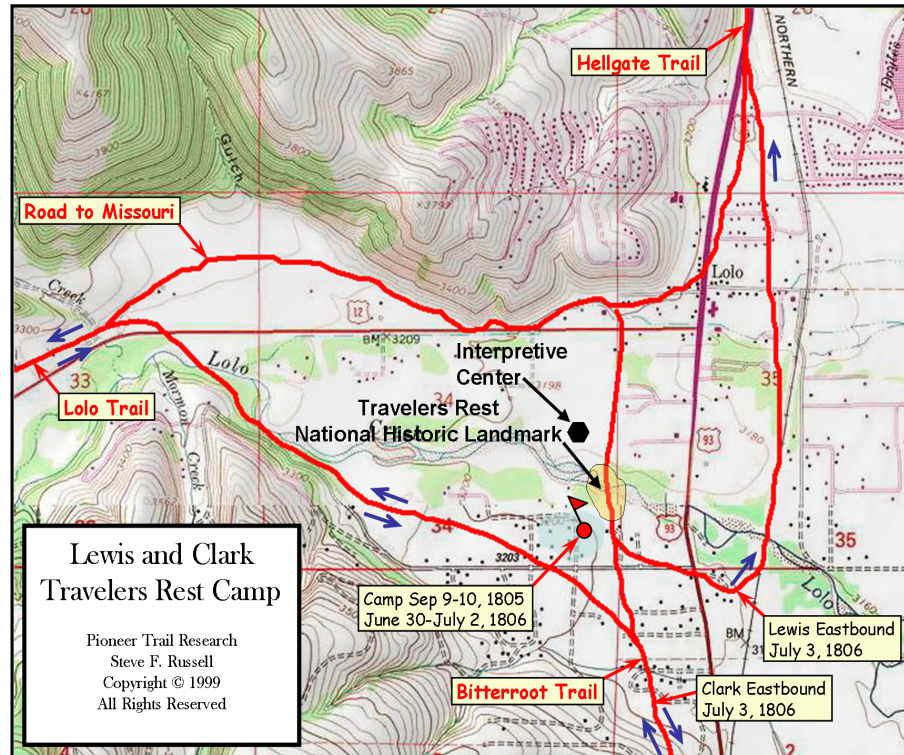


Figure 3. Modern topographic map of approximately the same area as shown on the Clark map in Figure 2.

Site Analysis (Historical Preservation, Land Ownership, Archaeology)

The camping location is now surrounded by housing development⁴ and is all located on private land⁵. It is very likely that the site was heavily used over hundreds of years as a camp by both the Nez Perce and Salish. Archaeological investigation of the site will probably detect a significant amount of Native American activity. However, the use of the site by the Corps of Discovery is such a tiny fraction of this long term use that it would be very fortuitous if anything would be

⁴ (1999 Report) A major archaeological investigation of the site is not warranted and would desecrate a site important to the Native Americans that used it. However, limited archaeological investigation is needed to provide the necessary information to interpret the site from the Salish perspective as well as that of Lewis and Clark. The site should be protected by acquisition of the remaining land to the north of Jade Lane and construction of facilities to accommodate visitors. It will be a major challenge to construct parking and visitor facilities that will not impact the Native American heritage resources in the area but careful planning and archaeological research can minimize the effect. The central portion of the campsite should have minimal development. What has been done at the Big Hole Battlefield is a good example of minimal impact. {Since I wrote this in 1999, an archeological study of the flood plain to the north of the campsite has been conducted. For more information, consult the National Register of Historic Places for more information on the National Historic Landmark Application. This site is also within the borders of the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark.

⁵ (update from 1999) Thankfully, since this report was written in 1999, several parcels of private land have been purchased to create Travelers Rest State Park. This land encompasses almost all of the campsite location on the bench land. Additionally, an archaeology dig was performed.

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found that could be directly traced to the expedition.

Additional Maps and Photos

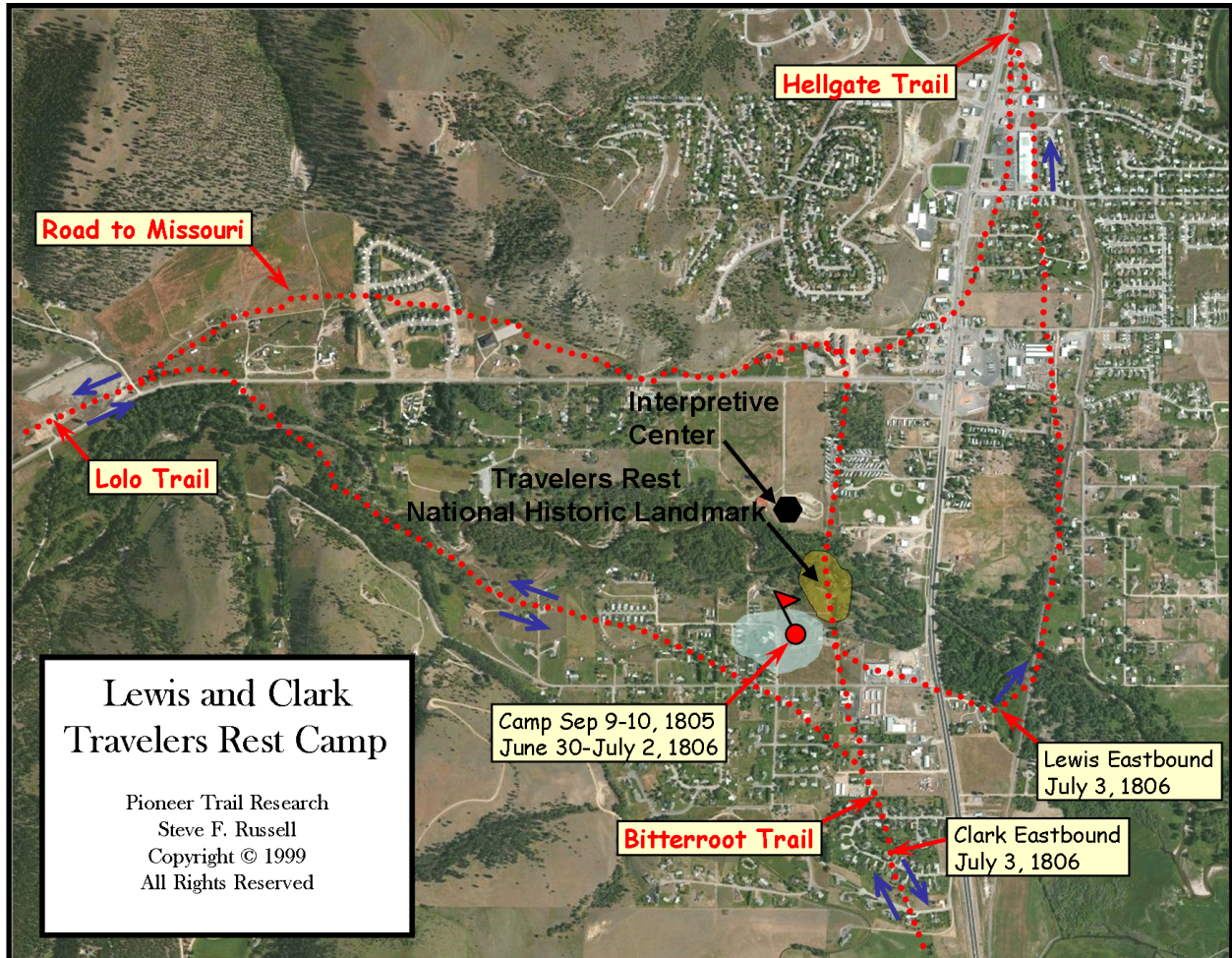


Figure 4. Satellite photo showing the Campsite of Sep 9, 1805 and the historic trails in the surrounding area. The original black and white aerial photo for this figure was replaced by a color satellite photo (Bing Maps) when they became available.

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Figure 5. Oblique aerial photo of the campsite looking westward up Lolo Creek (Jim Wark Airphoto)



Figure 6. Satellite photo of the campsite (Red Star)

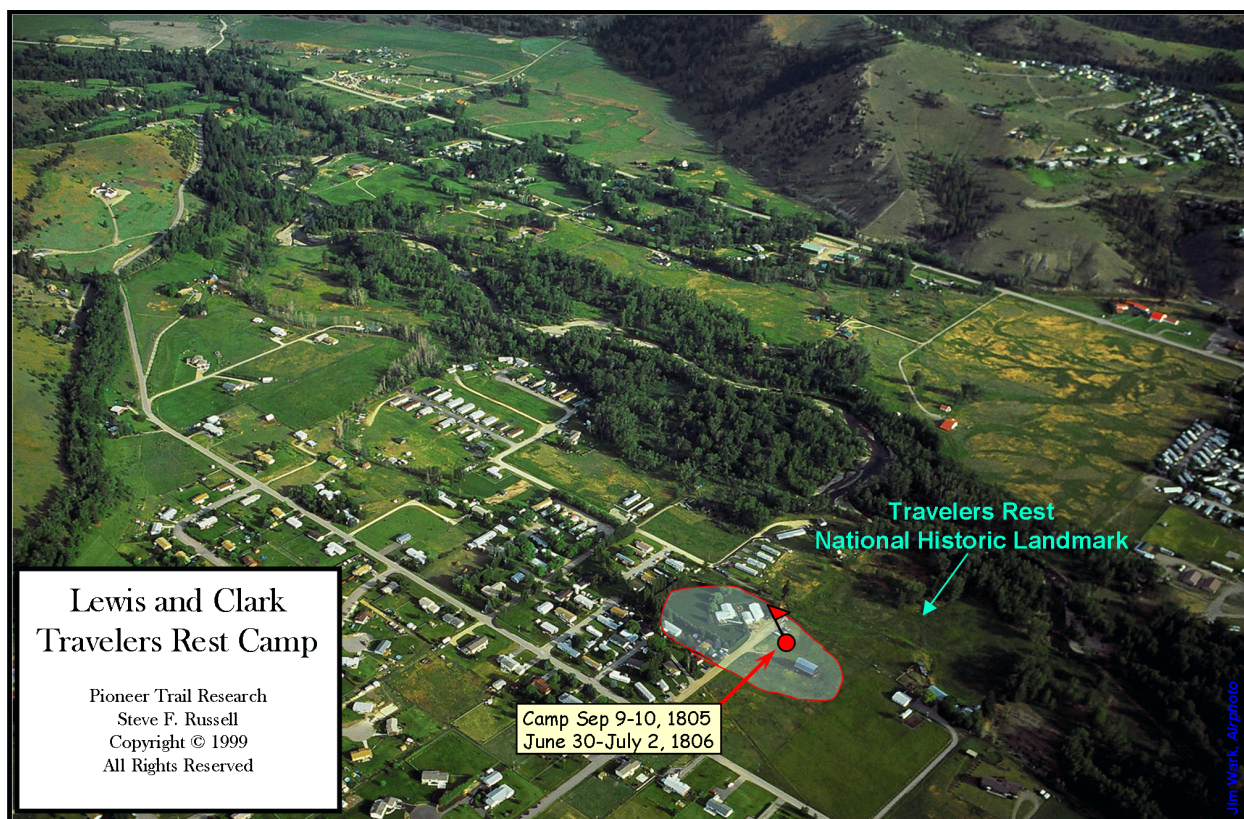


Figure 7. Oblique aerial photo of the campsite area looking northwest. (Jim Wark Airphoto)

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Campsite looking north-northeast from the ridge to the south. (Steve F. Russell)



Figure 8. Land ownership map from <http://svc.mt.gov/msl/mtcadastral/>. Travelers Rest State Park is shown in blue.

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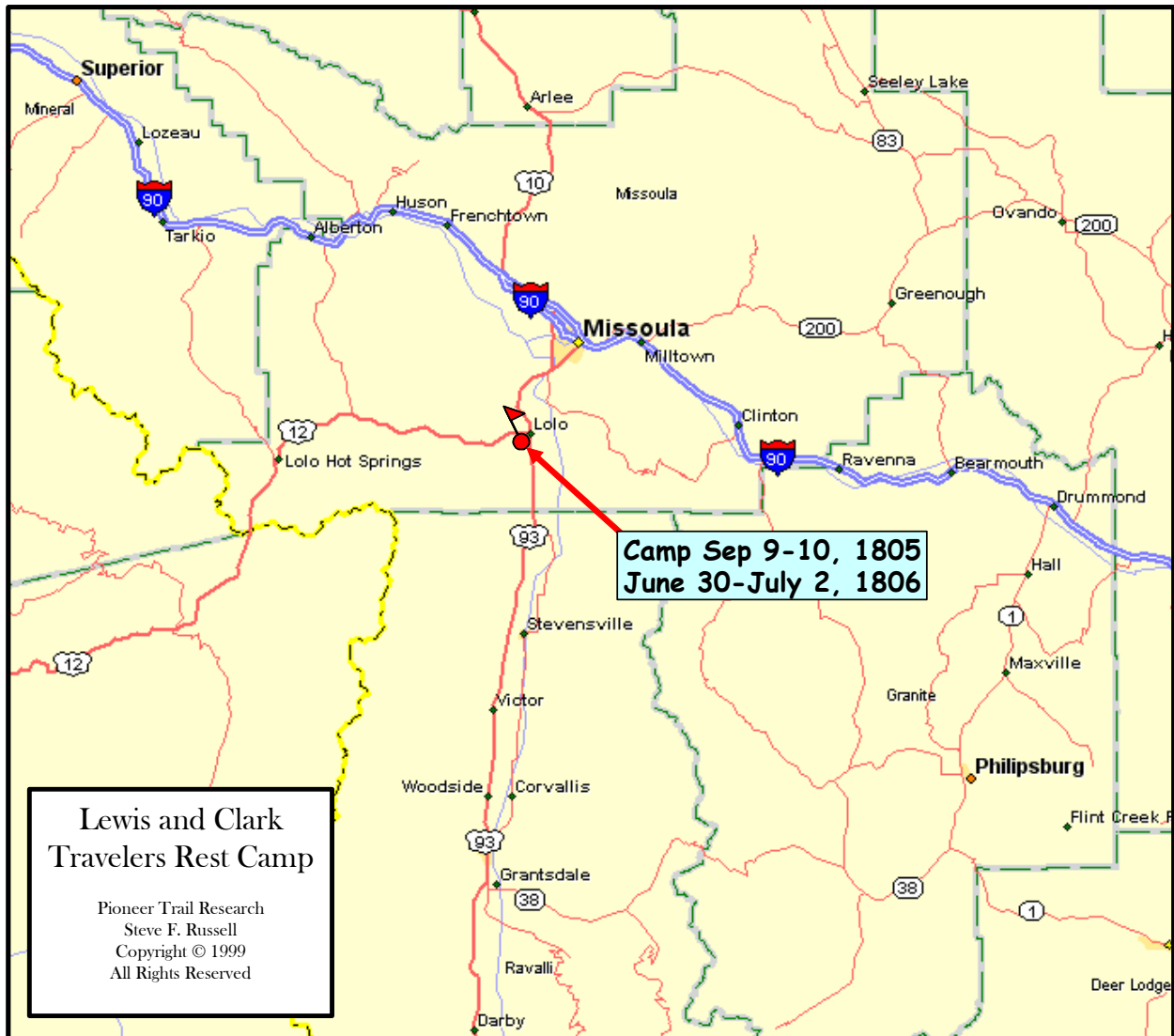


Figure 9. Large-scale Montana highway map showing the location of the campsite relative to Lolo, Missoula, Montana, and surrounding areas.

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